Annual Report of the Com. on Bibles Tracts and Religious Educat.

On Bibles

Your Committee in proceeding briefly to Report to the Society the facts which have come under their observation during the past year, and to lay before you the existing state of Bible operations throughout the world, so far as they have been able to ascertain it; would for a moment present to the Society, the state of Christendom in reference to this enterprise prior to the existence of Bible Societies in their present organized and efficient condition. This perhaps may be seen by the statement of one or two facts. In tracing the origin of Bible societies we need not go beyond the commencement of the ~~Presbyterian~~ present century. When the Plan of the B & F. Bible Society had scarcely been matured, and the foundation of that institution not yet laid, it was a serious question which engaged the attention of some grasping minds, whether it was possible to print the scriptures in ~~one~~ three or four languages, and distribute them in Britain and the neighbouring nations, this tho it would at first sight appear to argue a timidity and reserve incompatible with the minds of those whose philanthropy and enterprise set on foot this noble institution, may be accounted for. The present state of the world in reference to Bible circulation affords a solution to this doubt which ought to draw forth our gratitude to Him, who has thus blessed human efforts, and which is calculated to inspire with courage the Christian philanthropist. The Bible is now translated into 189 different languages and languages which may be read and are understood by 3/4 of the human family. About the period referred to, it was a suggestion thrown out by Sir William Jones, that if a single book of the New testament were translated into the language of the Hindoos, (he first particularly upon the

gospel of Luke) and left to itself without note or comment. He was sure that the effects would in a few years exceed the warmest anticipating of his fellow Christians. It is our lot to enjoy the pleasure to be derived from a realization of his hopes as we look abroad on the world and see the effects which the Bible translated, without note or comment, and however without the prayers of Christiany and the helping of the spirit, has produced in promoting the happiness of mankind.

According to the arrangement established by this Committee we are first directed to Great Britain. Here is the British and Foreign Bible Soc. which has now been in active operation for a period of 30 years, during this time it has circulated about 60 000 000 of Bibles. Spread them over the world to the extremity of the East and West, disseminated them over the vast empire of Russia The influence it has thus exerted in enlightening Europe, has been justly compared to their Aurora Borealis, as the Poet has it

"As from their own pole northly in radiant streams
Bright over Europe burst the Boreal morn"

In the 35th annual report of this Society ~~to which~~, it appears their receipts for the present year were £105. 9s 5s. 2d. 1l. During the year preceding the 34th annual report, the number of Bibles and testaments distributed at home and abroad was 594,398. This Society has four agents in England & Wales, one in France, one in Germany, one in Greece, one in the West Indies, one in Canada one in China. To this Society there have lately been made some donations of unusual munificence, and they are now engaged in publishing an edition of the scriptures, to be sold at a low rate. As to the domestic operations of this body, we have nothing further to report, and would before leaving the field advert to the singular success which attends the circulation of the scriptures among the Catholic population of Ireland. One who speaks

from actual observation, says "the love of the language is so ~~great~~ strong that nothing can deter them from reading the Irish scripture, that who would cast the English Bible in the fire cherish the Irish scripture in their bosom. What begins with the love of language soon becomes a higher principle. The matter of the Bible begins mightily to attract ~~them~~ and move them. All the rage of the priests, and the curses of the curses of the altar have been tried in vain to affright them from the Irish bible. For the benefit of this people the psalms of David have been translated into Irish verse, and the sweet songs of Sion have supplanted the wild notes of rebellion and discontent. On turning to the continent of Europe and first to France we find the friends of religion are ~~now~~ permitted to labour in this field with some degree of security, and the word of God is widely disseminated. At the capital there exist two Bible societies, and for several years past upwards of 100 000 copies of the scriptures have been put in circulation. This country furnishes a signal instance of the success with which it pleases God still to crown the efforts of Bible Societies. Such a distribution as this in a country where a few years ago scarcely a copy of the Bible was in many places to be met with, cannot fail to inspire the friends of the cause with sentiments of wonder and praise. In Italy little can as yet be effected by Bible Societies, such is the influence of the Papal church that the Bible is with few exceptions trusted in the hands of the common reader unless guarded by comments, which its holy author never sanctioned.

To Spain we look with feelings of gratitude and rejoicing as to what was in the two years preceding the 34th annual report of B & F. B. S. viz 1834-38. Editions of the scriptures in the Spanish & Catalan had been issued from the Spanish press amounting to 5000 Bibles and 13 000 new testaments, besides those which had been sent from England. The issues of 1838 amounted to between 5 and 6 000 volumes. The agent of the B & F. B. S. having during 1838

succeeded in carrying thro the press at Madrid, an edition of the new testament of 5000 copies, spent about 5 months in travelling thro the provinces seeking to bring the holy book into circulation. He acted almost in direct opposition to the principle of obtaining a price for them. On his return to Madrid, he opened a room as shop for the public sale of the scriptures, this however after a short time was not allowed by the authorities, while it remained open some hundreds of copies were sold.

In Germany notwithstanding the large distribution of the scriptures during the last 20 years, the call for them is increasing, this is evident from the reports of the Bible Societies of the Protestant kingdoms and states of Germany, which at a moderate estimate annually circulate from 80 000 to 90000 copies. chiefly bibles, independent of those distributed by the B & F. B.S. which since the establishment of their agency in that country in 1830 has circulated 341882 copies of the sacred writings. In Poland many distributions are effected. In Belgium the cause is highly prosperous, though it meets with violent opposition from the Catholic priesthood. But a few years since not more than about 8000 copies could be distributed in a year During 1838 not less than 20548 volumes

In Russia, there are the Russia Protestant Bible Soc. and the Riga Bible Society, actively engaged in circulating the scriptures the latter particularly in Livonia, to this field the attention of the A.B.S. has lately been directed, thro a clergyman in St Petersburg, a correspondence has been opened with various pastors in relation to the destitution of the scriptures among their respective flocks, to supply the want - since the board of the A.B.S. have made several remittances. The south Russian field is one of great interest, in that together with Moldavia there are computed to be 100 000 Germans, the greater portion of whom are destitute of the word of God. Among them there is a great desire to receive the

scriptures. Not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of the influence which they may exert on the millions of Russia. It is greatly to be desired that they be soon supplied. To effect this B+F B+S have already made several grants.
In Sweden there are the Swedish Bible Society and a Society in Finland and also at Stockholm an agency of the B+F.B.S. by whose means the Bible in the Swedish and Finnish languages is to a considerable extent circulated in that Country.
In Greece the facilities for circulating the scriptures are very great. There are stationed American Missionaries of various denominations, and also of other Countries, all engaged in translating or circulating the word of God. A new translation of the whole scriptures has lately been prepared by a learned native, the agent of the ABS. for the Levant Mr Calhoun in a letter of July 17-1839. says. "the work continues to prosper in Greece. At Athens is the depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society, from which are issued great numbers continually. At Patras the demand for the scriptures increased so rapidly about the beginning of the year that for a time the brethren were unable to supply it for want of books." We have reason to believe that the scriptures as a general thing are read, scriptural allusions that are sometimes made by those calling for a second book have often been strikingly interesting. In passing along the streets it is not uncommon to see the people of the shops, when not otherwise employed, with the word of God open before them.
In Asia Minor this good work meets with much opposition from the bigotted Ecclesiastics, hence it is but little that is accomplished in that ~~matter~~ quarter, in and around Smyrna, scarcely an individual inquires after the sacred volume. In Brousa, which is situated near the sea of Marmora in the northwestern part of Asia Minor, the persecution has recently broken out more furiously than ever. In a letter of June 21st 1839. Mr

Schneider says in writing to the agent of the agent of the A.B.S. "as to Graco Turkish Bible I do not think it would be desirable for you to send me any more at present. I have some copies still of all the portions on hand and in these days of opposition I have hardly any calls for them. Of the number of books consumed by the order of the Greek Bishop, there were various parts of the Bible. Sad indeed must be the state of the Greek church when its ministry can openly and with impunity burn the word of God.

At Constantinople a considerable number of copies of the scriptures have been distributed and in various languages, and the Jews begin more to purchase the Hebrew Spanish psalms, which a year ago excited so much opposition and were anathematized in all the synagogues. The Bible in the Hebrew Spanish is in course of publication at Vienna, at the expense of the A.B.S. and is under the direction of Mr Schauffler an American Missionary at Constantinople. This is designed for the Jews in Turkey who once came from Spain and who use the Spanish tongue in the Hebrew character.

As to Persia, among the Mohammedans, the prospects of a speedy circulation are gloomy. Among the opposed Nestorians, there is no possibility of selling the scriptures, many are desirous of having them in the Syriac and some few Nestorian ecclesiastics are studying the Hebrew. Among the Nestorians detached portions of the scriptures exist, but they are so scarce, that it is thought necessary to teach a child to read with the book, bottom side up or turned on either side, as well as in a perpendicular position, so that four or six persons may read from a single book while they form a circle around it. Dr Grant says that besides the psalms of David, which enter largely into the prescribed forms of devotion, he had been able to find but a single copy of the Old testament in a province containing a population of 20.000 souls. A Scotch missionary at

Tebrit is completing a translation of the whole Bible into the Persian language which is to be published at the expense of the B + F. B.S.
To India, we cannot turn but with feelings of deep interest. To this field the British and Foreign Bible Soc. has directed much attention, here they have made some of their most extensive efforts, to this country they have sent in books, or paper, or for the purpose of translation to the amount of nearly £112.000. And towards the opening of the way for the more wide dispensation of the scripture in this vast country much has been effected. The Bible has been translated into all the principal languages of the Peninsula, and many, many thousands of copies have been issued. Compared, however with the work of supplying 134 000 000 of people with the bible. the "most extensive Combination of human strength appear but weakness, & the united resources of the most efficient organizations seem altogether inadequate. But "let the weak say I am strong". In India there are several societies engaged in printing and circulating the scriptures, at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. In Ceylon there are two Societies at Jaffna and Colombo. auxiliary to the B + F. B.S. which have recently printed large editions of the whole scriptures in the Singalese, and part of the scriptures in the Tamil and Telegoo.
In China, the Bible has not hardly been dispensated, and its effects in that mighty empire we are not permitted yet to trace. we see however more than enough to encourage the hope, that at a no distant period it will have found its way, and spread wide its moralizing influence. In the neighbouring countries there are vast multitudes of Chinese who may receive the scriptures and carry them into the very heart of the Empire. In the Kingdom of Siam, the ~~Straits~~ Singapore, Penang and Malacca, and the Islands of the Archipelago, the number of Chinese are estimated at 300000. Although the greater part of these are excluded from the benevolent labours of Protestants, yet it is here we are in the mean time to

look for those effects which will afterwards tell on the evangelization of the millions of China. The whole of the northern coast with Borneo. The western coast of Mindanao are being explored by American and British Missionaries who as they go sow the seed of revealed truth.
Into the Chinese language there are three distinct versions of the Bible. The first made by Dr Marshman of Serampore, the second by Dr Morrison of Macao, and the third by Medhurst, Gutzlaff and others. The most recent communications from Mr Gutzlaff give encouragement. He is engaged with the aid of some Japanese in translating the gospels into that language. Although the efforts to spread the Scriptures there are feeble and limited, yet when we see a host of learned and pious missionaries gathering on the border of China with the keys in their hands, and the Bible translated, and with an increasing knowledge of the language, the errors and the wants of the nation, we cannot but hope that an effectual will before a remote period open the way into that vast empire.
At Sidney in New South Wales and Hobart Town in Van Diemans Land are Societies auxiliary to the B & F B S making liberal donations to the Parent Soc. and giving the Scriptures, which shew that in even these seats of the earth the seed has taken root & flourishes.
As to South Africa, we have no particulars to report, the destitution is very great and the demand for the Scriptures daily increasing. The schools at the Cape are numerous and there is a field of usefulness, which invites the efforts of Bible Societies.
On turning to the Sandwich Islands, the transformation which has been taken place within 20 years is matter of wonder. And could we compute the comparative influence of the various human agencies, which have been used in effecting this wonderful change, we would

find that no small share belongs to the A.B.S. Vigorous efforts are now being put forth for this field, & an edition of 10.000 copies of the old testament, were recently in progress.

In South America the cause has many obstacles; during the struggle for independence in this country, while the Priesthood in their opposition to the establishment of free institutions were kept under restraint. the Bible distributor was unmolested, But now in the enjoyment of a civil liberty rather the specious than real, domestic feuds heave up and the Catholic Clergy are but too successful in their attempts to keep the Bible from the people. The board of the A.B.S. are now supplying the Portuguese territory after having for some time furnished imported copies. In general the prospect in this field are gloomy. the destitution is past beyond computation, & the obstacles to success in most places insurmountable.

On returning to our own country we find a growing attention to this subject. The American Bible Soc. has its various agents engaged in different parts and who are arousing public attention to this subject Auxiliaries are active in many parts, but in many they are sleeping over the subject. About 10 years ago the A.B.S resolved to supply every destitute family in the country; and in about three years this was well nigh accomplished and about ½ million of households were put in possession of the sacred oracles. Within a few years back examinations have been made in various places, and from reports which have been published, it is destitution appears, which is truly appalling. At its last anniversary the Soc. called the public attention to this matter, but little has yet been done. There is much encouragement to the friends of the Bible in the incipient efforts, which have been made to introduce the Bible into schools. The efforts of this Society have been somewhat plain during

the two past years, but in other respects the Bible cause does not seem on a more prosperous condition. The wide field of domestic operations must be cultivated by means of the local auxiliaries, and many of them it is to be regretted are in a languishing condition & need to be revived. On this Society the demands from foreign lands are urgent from Southern Russia, Greece, Persia, India and the Sandwich Islands. For foreign distribution the Society at its last anniversary promised $35.000 The American B.C.F.M. has made no provision for supplying during the year its 26 missions, 140 ordained missionaries with the means to prepare the scriptures - they look to the Bible Soc. which has also promised means to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions & also the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society. The destitution at home is great beyond conception, as facts indicate, and present effort is unequal to the work of supplying. The calls from abroad are loud and urgent and must & a more expanded liberality and sympathy must be awakened before they can be answered.

We would in conclusion advert to the A.F.B.S. & the origin and distinctive objects of which are well known. The organization of this Society commenced in 1836 and has now in various parts of the County upwards of a hundred auxiliaries, its prospects are in a high degree auspicious and encouraging, and its present circumstances & [illegible] form a [illegible] to the zeal and liberality of its friends. During the first two years of the Societies existence its the objects of its benevolence were confined to Foreign nations. This feature has now been obliterated. But their energies are still mainly employed in printing and circulating the translations of the scriptures made by by Baptist missionaries. Since its commencement it has appropriated $50 000

to the work of translating and distributing the Bible -

Your committee in laying before this Society the rapid progress which they been made in the dispensation of divine truth, and the extent to which it has been carried forward, would acknowledge that it is the Lords work & wondrous in our eyes, while we ~~would~~ wonder we would be grateful, and while we thank God as we look forward to the much that is to be done, we would take courage.
Bearing in mind the inviolable connection between Christian principles and Christian obligation, we cannot be sure that many millions of bibles must be circulated before the world is converted to Jesus Christ and all will acknowledge they must be supplied by those who possess and appreciate them. The cause of this cause must be on ward, the scale of operation must be ~~enlarged~~, enlarged. The doors are opened on almost every hand. Christian missionaries are abroad to prepare and circulate the sacred volume.
It is the desire of your committee so far as the influence of this Society by many a hand, by this brief statement, the Bible cause may receive a new impulse and by your prayers and labors helped forward to that glory to which it aims -

James McWilliam
Reporter

presented to the Soc. Inquiry
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